

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSM-03 CIAE-00  
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01  
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
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AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
USMISSION USUN NY  
USMISSION SINAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 7775

E. O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PEPR PINT PGOV IS  
SUBJ: KNESSET APPROVES GOI CABINET DECISION AFTER LENGTHY  
DEBATE

1. SUMMARY: THE KNESSET APPROVED JUNE 19 THE GOVERNMENT'S  
DEFENSE OF ITS REPLY TO THE AMERICAN QUESTIONS BY VOTE  
OF 59 TO 37 WITH 10 ABSTENTIONS. DAYAN OPENED AND CLOSED  
THE DEBATE AND EXPLAINED THAT MOST MINISTERS DID NOT BELIEVE  
ISRAEL SHOULD DECIDE NOW ON WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE TERRI-  
TORIES AFTER FIVE YEARS. DAYAN SAID THAT ISRAEL REGARDS  
ADMINISTRATIVE AUTONOMY FOR THE WEST BANK AND GAZA AS A  
KIND OF "PERMANENT STATUS." PERES CRITICIZED BOTH THE  
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CABINET DECISION AND THE GOI AUTONOMY PLAN. YADIN REGRETTED  
THAT THE REPLY DID NOT SPEAK OF A "PERMANENT ARRANGEMENT."  
IN KNESSET CORRIDORS THERE WAS NO CONFIDENCE THAT THE  
CABINET'S RESPONSE WOULD SATISFY WASHINGTON OR GENERATE  
THE RENEWAL OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. BEGIN'S BAD HEALTH  
WAS ANOTHER PERVASIVE TOPIC OF CONVERSATION. END SUMMARY

2. FOLLOWING A SIX-HOUR DEBATE, DURING WHICH A TOTAL OF TWENTY-TWO SPEAKERS ADDRESSED THE CHAMBER, THE KNESSET APPROVED THE GOVERNMENT'S DEFENSE OF ITS REPLY TO THE AMERICAN QUESTIONS BY A VOTE OF 59 TO 37 WITH 10 ABSTENTIONS. THE 10 ABSTAINERS INCLUDED GEULA COHEN (LIKUD), JAND NINE DMC MEMBERS.

DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN (LIKUD) AND THE OTHER FIVE DMC MEMBERS PRESENT (HALEVI, YAGURI, ASAD, ELIAHU, AND NOF) ABSENTED THEMSELVES FROM THE VOTE, ALONG WITH ONE NRP DOVE, AVRAHAM MELAMED. OTHERWISE, THE PARTIES MAINTAINED CLOSED RANKS IN THEIR VOTING.

3. FOREIGN MINISTER DAYAN, OPENING AND CLOSING THE DEBATE EXPLAINED THAT MOST MINISTERS REFUSED TO COMMIT THE GOI TO A DECISION ON WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE TERRITORIES AFTER FIVE YEARS BECAUSE THEY REGARD ADMINISTRATIVE AUTONOMY AS A KIND OF "PERMANT STATUS" STRESSING REPEATEDLY THAT "AUTONOMY IS NOT A TRANSIENT FIVE-YEAR ARRANGEMENT," DAYAN CONTENDED THAT SINCE "THEY" (THE ARABS) HAD NOT EVEN BEGUN TO DISCUSS ISRAEL'S ADMINISTRATIVE PROGRAM, THERE WAS NO NEED FOR ISRAEL TO DISCUSS WHETHER IT WAS READY TO DECIDE ON CHANGES AFTER FIVE YEARS. HOWEVER, DAYAN QUALIFIED HIS ARGUMENT BY NOTING THAT THE ADMINISTRATIVE AUTONOMY PLAN IS NOT AN UNALTERABLE CAST-IRON PLAN. IT DOES

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ALLOW FOR REVIEW, HE SAID, AND IT DOES LEAVE THE ISSUE OF SOVEREIGNTY COMPLETELY OPEN AND UNDECIDED. DAYAN ALSO ARGUED THAT THE ADMINISTRATIVE AUTONOMY PLAN IS A FULL AND SATISFACTORY REALIZATION OF RES 242. HE EXPLAINED THAT THE PHRASE "NATURE OF RELATIONS" REFERS TO THE RECIPROCAL RELATIONS WHICH THE WEST BANK TERRITORY MIGHT HAVE WITH ISRAEL AND JORDAN, CAUTIONING THAT THIS DID NOT IMPLY ANY STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN CONTROL OF THE AREAS. HE AGREED THAT ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TERRITORIES WERE POSSIBLE, BUT POINTED OUT THAT NONE HAD THUS FAR BEEN PROPOSED.

4. OPPOSITION LEADER PERES SHARPLY CRITICIZED BOTH THE CABINET DECISION AND THE GOI AUTONOMY PLAN. HE SARCASTICALLY CHARACTERIZED THE OUTCOME AS A COMPROMISE AMONG THE MINISTERS, IMPLYING THAT THE BEGIN DRAFT WAS PRESENTED AS THE ONLY WAY OF AVOIDING A CABINET SPLIT. HE SPECULATED THAT THE DECISION WOULD HARM ISRAEL'S INTERNATIONAL SITUATION AND ISOLATE IT STILL FURTHER. HE ARGUED THAT IT ALSO WOULD FURTHER STRAIN RELATIONS WITH THE US AND THAT IT WOULD HAMPER NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT. HE THEN SAID THAT IN HIS SALZBURG MEETING WITH SADAT, THE

EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING FOR ISRAEL'S SECURITY PROBLEM IN THE WEST BANK AND THE NEED FOR BORDER MODIFICATIONS THERE. ACCORDING TO PERES, SADAT ALSO INDICATED AN ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION EXISTED FOR THE QUESTION OF THE SINAI AIRFIELDS. HE SAID THAT WHEN SADAT REJECTED THE IDEA OF BORDER CHANGES IN THE SINAI, HE (PERES) HAD REPLIED THAT A LARGE MAJORITY OF KNESSET MEMBERS BACKED THE GOI POSITION ON SINAI SETTLEMENTS FOR SECURITY REASONS ONLY.

5. DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER YADIN CREDITED THE DMC FOR HAVING ENSURED THAT THE COMPROMISE REPLY TO THE US WAS MORE POSITIVE THAN SOME OF THE DRAFTS SUBMITTED. HOWEVER, HE EXPRESSED REGRET THAT THE REPLY DID NOT SPEAK OF

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 7775

"A PERMANENT ARRANGEMENT," WHICH WOULD HAVE LEFT ISRAEL IN A STRONGER NEGOTIATING POSITION. HE SAID THAT A SUPREME EFFORT MUST NOW BE MADE TO RENEW THE NEGOTIATIONS AND CALLED ON SADAT TO RESUME DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT PRIOR CONDITIONS. HE NOTED THAT IF EFFORTS TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS FAILED, IT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR THE WHOLE WORLD TO KNOW THAT

ISRAEL WAS NOT TO BLAME. HE ALSO DECLARED THAT IF EGYPT OR JORDAN ANNOUNCED READINESS TO DISCUSS AN ARRANGEMENT BASED ON TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE, AND IF THE GOI REFUSED TO CONSIDER SUCH AN OFFER, HE WOULD IMMEDIATELY PROPOSE THAT HIS PARTY LEAVE THE COALITION.

6. ABBA EBAN (ALIGNMENT) TOOK ISSUE NOT ONLY WITH THE CABINET  
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REPLY TO THE U.S., BUT WITH THE BASIC GOI NEGOTIATING POSITION. HE SHARPLY CRITICIZED THE GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY PLAN AS CONTRADICTORY TO THE PARTITION PRINCIPLE WHICH HAD ORIGINALLY CREATED THE STATE OF ISRAEL.

7. MOSHE SHAMIR (LIKUD LA'AM) SPOKE IN SUPPORT OF THE DECISION, IN CONTRAST TO HIS HARDLINE COLLEAGUE GEULA COHEN, WHO EXPRESSED HER OPPOSITION TO THE AUTONOMY PLAN BY ABSTAINING. HOWEVER, HE NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S REPLY WAS FAULTY IN NOT MAKING CLEAR THAT, "THERE IS NO WAY OF LINKING ZIONISM AND 242."

8. COMMENT: IN OUR JUNE 19 SOUNDINGS AMONG KNESSET MEMBERS, THERE WAS NO SIGN OF CONFIDENCE THAT THE CABINET'S RESPONSE TO THE AMERICAN QUESTIONS WOULD SATISFY WASHINGTON OR GENERATE THE RENEWAL OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. INSTEAD, THE GENERAL MOOD WAS APPREHENSIVE ABOUT THE U.S. REACTION. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THE SUBSTANCE OF THE ISRAELI REPLY RECEIVED LITTLE ATTENTION IN THE KNESSET CORRIDORS. MOST MK'S PREFERRED TO TALK ABOUT THE CABINET'S AGONY IN REACHING ITS DECISION.

9. DURING THE LONG HOURS OF DEBATE, THE KNESSET WAS ABUZZ WITH SPECULATION OVER WEIZMAN'S INTENTIONS AND FUTURE. WEIZMAN HAD BEEN SEVERELY CRITICIZED AT A LIKUD CAUCUS PRIOR TO THE DEBATE, WITH LA'AM MK MOSHE SHAMIR CALLING FOR HIS RESIGNATION. ONLY ONE OR TWO ROSE TO HIS DEFENSE. MOST MK'S AND JOURNALISTS WERE PREDICTING THAT WEIZMAN WOULD STAY ON AT LEAST IN THE SHORT TERM AS DEFENSE MINISTER AND WE AGREE, PROVIDED THAT THERE IS NOT ANOTHER SERIOUS PUBLIC RIFT BETWEEN HIM AND BEGIN. BUT A NUMBER OF POLITICIANS THOUGHT HIS DAYS IN THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT WERE NUMBERED. MANY REGARDED HIS WIDELY QUOTED STATEMENT FOLLOWING THE CABINET MEETING THAT HE  
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WAS NOW GOING TO PREPARE THE ARMY FOR THE NEXT WAR AS PARTICULARLY INTEMPERATE AND TYPICAL OF HIS IMPETUOUS STYLE.

10. THE CHAIRMAN OF THE LIKUD'S KNESSET FACTION, MK AVRAHAM SHARIR, BELIEVED THAT THE OPEN OPPOSITION OF THE DEFENSE MINISTER TO HIS PRIME MINISTER ON A MAJOR ISSUE WAS UNPRECEDENTED. HE THOUGHT WEIZMAN'S POSITION AS A MEMBER OF THE CABINET WAS NOW UNTENABLE. SHARIR DENIED STORIES IN YESTERDAY'S PRESS THAT HE CRITICIZED THE AUTONOMY PLAN AND WAS LINKED WITH LIBERAL MK'S SUPPORTING WEIZMAN. INDEED, SHARIR TOLD US, HE FULLY SUPPORTED THE CABINET'S REPLY TO THE AMERICAN QUESTIONS, AS WELL AS THE BEGIN PLAN FOR THE WEST BANK.

11. WEIZMAN'S PRESENCE DURING MUCH OF THE DEBATE SEEMED TO GIVE LIE INITIALLY TO PRESS REPORTS THAT HE WOULD STAY AWAY FROM THE KNESSET YESTERDAY, BUT IN THE END HE ABSENTED HIMSELF FROM THE VOTE, UNDERSCORING HIS OPPOSITION TO THE CABINET DECISION. HIS VOTE WAS SORELY MISSED BY THE GOVERNMENT. ANTICIPATING THE DMC'S ABSTENTION, THE LIKUD HAD MADE A STRENUOUS EFFORT TO OBTAIN AN ABSOLUTE KNESSET MAJORITY. TWO HERUT MK'S, YOSEF ROM AND RONNI MILO, WERE RECALLED FROM THE U.S. FOR THE VOTE. BUT BEGIN HAD TO SETTLE FOR 59 -- TWO LESS THAN A MAJORITY.

12. THE VOTE ALSO REVEALED THE DEEP DIVISION IN THE DMC. ALTHOUGH IN CAUCUS THE PARTY HAD VOTED TO ABSTAIN, THE ABSENCE OF THE FIVE DMC MK'S DURING THE KNESSET VOTE WAS THEIR DEMONSTRATION OF SUPPORT FOR THE CABINET DECISION. ONE OBSERVER REMARKED THAT THE NEXT SET OF AMERICAN QUESTIONS WOULD PROBABLY SPLIT THE DMC.

13. ANOTHER PERVERSIVE TOPIC OF CONVERSATION AMONG MK'S WAS BEGIN'S PHYSICAL CONDITION. OBSERVERS NOTED THAT HE HAD YIELDED TO DAYAN THE PRIVILEGE OF FINAL REBUTTAL IN THE DEBATE, AN EXERCISE BEGIN ENJOYS AND AT WHICH HE EXCELS. BAD HEALTH, SOURCES SAID, WAS THE REASON.

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## Message Attributes

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